

REMARKS

Claim 4 was objected to because of the phrase “selected from the group consisting of of”. Claim 4 has been corrected by deleting the second occurrence of “of”.

Claims 6-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. In claims 6, 7, and 10, the phrase “the base comprises” is recited and is asserted to be indefinite. Applicant has amended claims 6 and 7 to substitute Markush-type language “the base is selected from the group consisting of”; claim 10 has been canceled in view of the addition of new claim 14. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the 112 rejection of claims 6 and 7 as amended is respectfully requested. In claim 8, the phrase “the alkaline-earth metal base comprises” is recited and is asserted to be indefinite. Applicant has amended claim 8 to substitute Markush-type language “the alkaline-earth metal base is selected from the group consisting of”. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the 112 rejection of claim 8 as amended is respectfully requested. In claim 9, the phrase “the oxides of alkaline-earth metals comprise” is recited and is asserted to be indefinite. Applicant has amended claim 9 to substitute Markush-type language “the oxides of alkaline-earth metals are selected from the group consisting of”. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the 112 rejection of claim 9 as amended is respectfully requested.

Claims 1 and 3-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a) as being obvious over Moore (U.S. Patent No. 5,019,148) in view of Mori et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,935,635). This ground of rejection is traversed for all of the reasons recited in the previously filed amendments and remarks. In addition, claim 1 has been amended to recite that the first step is “combining in a reaction vessel an inert carrier and a liquid organic acid which is substantially absorbed by the carrier”. This amendment is made to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the aspect of the present invention that the liquid organic acid is substantially absorbed by the inert carrier before the base is added to the reaction vessel.

This is an important aspect of the present invention as it slows down the reaction when the base is added. Since the acid is substantially absorbed by the carrier, it is not all immediately available to react with the added base. Further, the reaction takes place more on the surface of the carrier particles that have absorbed the acid, with the result that the organic acid salt forms as a layer or coating on the carrier particles. Both of these factors contribute to the formation of granules of a desired size rather than the production of large

agglomerations that must later be broken into a smaller size for feeding to animals. In addition, slowing of the rate of reaction between the acid and base constituents reduces the peak temperature in the reaction vessel. If the acid and base are added together without first substantially absorbing the acid by the carrier, the strength of the reaction releases sufficient heat to vaporize the acid resulting in the undesirable release of noxious acid vapors from the reaction vessel and a concomitant loss of the acid constituent.

This claim language further distinguishes the invention from Moore where the first step is to commingle acids and bases to form a strong cement, and wherein the inert material, if used, is added after the fact for coating of the granules (see col. 7, lines 8-12, as cited by the Examiner at the end of the second full paragraph on page 4 of the March 22, 2004, Office Action). In simple terms, the present application claims a process in which the first step is commingling the acids and inert carrier wherein the acids are substantially absorbed by the inert carrier and then the base or bases are added; in contrast, the first step of the Moore process is to combine the acids and the bases and then an inert carrier may be added as a coating. There is absolutely no teaching in either Moore or Mori et al. of a process in which the acids are substantially absorbed by the inert carrier before a base is added. Claim 14 has been added to more directly recite the order of the steps. Claim 15 is dependent on claim 14 and has added the limitation that the inorganic base be selected from the group consisting of alkali metal bases and alkaline-earth metal bases. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the Section 103(a) rejection in light of the foregoing amendments to the claims and these remarks is respectfully requested.

Accordingly, the purpose of the claimed invention is not taught nor suggested by the cited references, nor is there any suggestion or teaching which would lead one skilled in the relevant art to combine the references in a manner which would meet the purpose of the claimed invention. Because the cited references, whether considered alone, or in combination with one another, do not teach nor suggest the purpose of the claimed invention, Applicant respectfully submits that the claimed invention patentably distinguishes over the prior art, including the art cited merely of record.

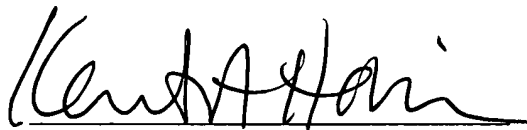
Based on the foregoing, Applicant respectfully submits that its claims 1, 3 - 9, and 11 - 15, as amended, are in condition for allowance at this time, patentably distinguishing

over the cited prior art. Accordingly, reconsideration of the application and passage to allowance are respectfully solicited.

The Examiner is respectfully urged to call the undersigned attorney at (515) 288-2500 to discuss the claims in an effort to reach a mutual agreement with respect to claim limitations in the present application which will be effective to define the patentable subject matter if the present claims are not deemed to be adequate for this purpose.

Respectfully submitted,

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